Rehabilitation of Child Beggars

864. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of child beggars in the country, State-wise;

(b) whether Government have any plan to rehabilitate the child beggars in the country;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether Government plan to eliminate child begging in the country?

THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (DR. SATYA NARAYAN JATIYA): (a) No formal All India assessment has been undertaken by the Government to ascertain their number.

(b) to (d) The Government has taken a number of measures to check begging, including beggary by children, as also for the rehabilitation of beggars (including child beggars). Some of these measures undertaken to check begging (including begging by children) are enactment of legislations by State Governments and Union Territory Administrations, provisions of punishment for the persons employing or using a child for begging. The Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Act, 2000 addresses the needs of all children in need of care, protection rehabilitation and reintegration.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is implementing, since 1992-93, a Central Sector Scheme called 'An Integrated Programme for Street Children'. The objective of this programme is to prevent destitution of children and facilitate their withdrawal from a life on the streets and their social reintegration. The Programme provides for shelter, nutrition, health care, education, and recreation facilities to street children and seeks to protect them against abuse and exploitation including forced beggary.

CHILDLINE Service, a 24 hour free, phone service for children in distress, is running in 28 cities which can be accessed by a child in difficulty or an adult on his behalf by dialing 1098. The basic objective of this service is to respond to children in emergency situation and to refer them to relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations, which facilitate the rehabilitation of children in especially difficult circumstances including child beggars.